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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 002595

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/18/2017  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [OSCE](#) [TU](#)  
SUBJECT: TURKEY: PRO-KURDISH PARTY SAYS CROSS-BORDER  
OPERATION WOULD WORSEN TURKEY'S KURDISH PROBLEM

REF: A. ANKARA 2573

[1](#)B. ANKARA 2500

[1](#)C. ADANA 0120

Classified By: Political Counselor Janice Weiner for reasons 1.4(b),(d0

1.(C) Summary: MPs from the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP) told us DTP opposed the recent parliamentary motion authorizing a cross-border operation (ref A) because they believe violence would deepen the intractability of the Kurdish problem. Mounting pressure, including a deluge of legal cases, physical attacks on DTP offices, and a series of public statements against DTP, hampers the party's ability to pursue peaceful dialogue within parliament, according to our contacts. DTP is preparing for an October 26-28 convention in Diyarbakir that will bring together 500 leaders from different backgrounds to discuss options for achieving peace. The party will draw from conference proposals in finalizing DTP's agenda for its November 8 Ankara party convention. DTP leadership maintains it will continue a "principled approach" despite actions by the Court of Appeals Chief Prosecutor that DTP reads as a sign the prosecutor is considering launching a closure case. In fact, though DTP's public line has improved, it is walking a fine line. End summary.

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DTP Strongly Opposes a CBO  
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2.(C) DTP Vice Chair Selma Irmak told us DTP MPs voted against the October 17 parliamentary motion to authorize a CBO because they see peaceful dialogue as the only way to resolve the conflict. Twenty years of fighting between the Turkish military and terrorist PKK demonstrates the futility of a military solution. More violence would only deepen the wound. Irmak and Adana DTP Provincial Chairman Zeki Karatas believe the military is using the PKK as an "excuse" to launch a CBO. The real target, they claim, is Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) President Massoud Barzani. Both strongly prefer to resolve the issue peacefully through open dialogue in an environment that allows Kurds to express their ethnic and cultural identity.

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Pressure on DTP Mounts  
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3.(C) Irmak and Karatas said that ongoing judicial pressure on DTP is hampering efforts to pursue peaceful dialogue. Irmak highlighted a "deluge" of investigations and prosecutions against DTP members, including one against her for references she made to imprisoned PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan in a speech following an October 3 attack on DTP headquarters by two gunmen. Irmak noted that not one political party offered condolences to DTP after the incident. She accused the judiciary of applying a blatant double standard by continuing the trials of three DTP MPs -- Aysel Tugluk, Ayla Akat Ata, and Sebahat Tuncel -- despite a constitutional guarantee of immunity for MPs. The practice had always been for a court to suspend an ongoing case upon a person's election as MP. That practice had never been waived until the DTP cases; it continues to shield MPs from other parties.

4.(C) Karatas cited the Jandarma's October 7 arrest of three DTP mayors in Adana as the latest example of a broken justice system. The detentions followed the funeral of an Adana-born PKK militant, killed in recent clashes with the military. According to Karatas, DTP politicians attended the ceremony not to make a political statement but to extend condolences to the young man's family. They were then accused by Jandarma of praising terrorism and violating protest laws.

5.(C) Pressure is mounting from other quarters as well, according to Irmak. Following a series of PKK attacks in early October that killed over 30 soldiers, police and civilians (refs A, B), politicians of all stripes have stepped up calls on DTP to take an active stance against the PKK. PM Erdogan upped the tension in an October 10 CNN-Turk interview by urging DTP to denounce the PKK as a terrorist organization; Erdogan said inaction would be tantamount to

ANKARA 00002595 002 OF 002

legitimizing the PKK. Opposition parties publicly attacked DTP and have avoided any contact with them.

6.(C) The Kurdish community has also called on DTP to condemn the PKK following the recent up-tick in violence. In a recent "Zaman" newspaper article, several prominent Kurdish intellectuals and politicians criticized DTP for failing to take a clear stance against the PKK. Former People's Labor Party (HEP, a forerunner to DTP) MP Fehmi Isiklar said, "I believe they need to set a direction. As long as DTP remains attached to certain places, it won't succeed." On October 9, leaders of civil society and business groups in Diyarbakir organized a press conference to voice public opposition to the escalating violence and denounce all forms of armed violence as a method for resolving problems (ref C).

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Upcoming DTP Events Could Spell Trouble  
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7.(C) Irmak told us DTP is organizing two upcoming events: An October 26-28 "Democratic Public Congress" in Diyarbakir will bring together 500 delegates from different backgrounds to chart a course for solving the Kurdish issue peacefully. Invitations went out to delegates from non-DTP Kurdish parties such as HakPar and the Participatory Democracy Party (KADEP), academia, media, civil society, and the business community. On November 8, DTP will hold its Ankara party convention to select party leadership and set an agenda based on the October conference outcome. Irmak expects the agenda will prioritize expanding freedom of cultural expression in proposed constitutional amendments. DTP leadership believes the Court of Appeals Chief Prosecutor is gathering information on the party's activities (historically the first sign of an eventual case to close down a party), and would be watching closely these events. Despite such pressures, DTP will continue its "principled approach," Irmak said.

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Comment: Walking a Fine Line

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8.(C) Though we have seen no evidence to confirm DTP's suspicions of a possible closure case, DTP remains under the microscope. While the most recent party statements have been more forthright in condemning violence than the mixed messages they have sent in the past, DTP's public line is far from uniform -- and some of their actions are an engraved invitation to an activist, Kemalist judiciary. In light of the intense judicial campaign against DTP, as well as mounting pressure from other parties, it is unclear how long DTP leadership will be able to keep its MPs from reverting to the inflammatory rhetoric and positions that led to the party's ouster in 1993. We will continue to press DTP to use its position in parliament wisely, to condemn violence and the PKK's terrorist actions, and for all parties to work cooperatively within parliament.

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